



## REPORT

# EUROM Network Meeting 2018 Taking Stock of European Memory Policies House of European History June 5, 2018

# INTRODUCTION

*On the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2018, the European Observatory on Memories (EUROM) and the House of European History (HEH) jointly hosted [EUROM's 2018 Network Meeting: Taking Stock of European Memory Policies](#). In the form of a one-day open conference held in the auditorium of the House of European History, the meeting gathered some 55 people including academicians, representatives of trans-European organizations and networks, and those responsible for memory policies at a European level.*

*It hereby highlighted the work, advancement, and challenges of the different actors active in the field of memory and remembrance, while simultaneously offering a bridging opportunity enabling the different actors to critically reflect on the various ways in which their activities and decisions interact and influence each other.*

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emanating from such meetings into HEH itself.

## Opening remarks

### Welcome session

**Constanze Itzel**, Head of Unit, House of European History

**Jordi Guixé**, director of the European Observatory on Memories

Following a guided tour of the House of European History's permanent exhibition, given by one of its commissioners Martí Grau, the conference commenced with brief welcoming remarks by Constanze Itzel, Head of Unit at the House of European History (HEH), and Jordi Guixé, director of EUROM.



Itzel stressed the importance of the meeting, the aim of the HEH to use memory as a tool to break up a chronological historical narrative and to inspire critical reflection, questioned the possibility to agree on a single way of representing history, and pointed to the benefits of being able to host such a meeting at the HEH. Specifically, she referenced the constructive possibilities of learning from and incorporating conclusions, remarks, and lessons

Jordi Guixé remarked that the basis for European public policies on remembrance is the understanding of memories as a duty, and a citizens' democratic right. Guixé stressed the many complex challenges Europe is currently undergoing, and pointed to dialogue with our recent past as a value that can be instrumentalized in order to avoid repetition of past mistakes. In this vein, Guixé continued by pointing out that memory policies should be reinforced as a common democratic value in Europe. "Although we don't have a common or equal history and memory identities, the processes of memory and memorialization nowadays are much more similar in between different countries". According to him, it is also necessary to work on different scales and dimensions to achieve the transmission of knowledge and values. "Some of the keys are trans nationality, comparative processes and social participation", Guixé remarked.

## A Broader View on Politics on Memory

[Peter Vermeersch](#), professor at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) and senior researcher at the Institute for International and European Policy (IIEB)

Peter Vermeersch highlighted the utilization of a vocabulary of morality by nationalist actors in memory conflicts in Europe. He started by reaffirming [Tony Judt's](#) statement, that the European project was indeed not born out of optimism, ambition, and idealism, as retroactively has been imagined. "The ways we remember the past influence the ways we practice contemporary politics", said Vermeersch, succinctly explaining that different memories bring out different contemporary politics.



In regards to the politics of memory, the professor stressed, "they are as much, if not more, about making us forget, than they are about making us remember". To illustrate, he identified three mnemonic techniques of forgetting, which are especially prevalent in national and nationalist policies: the creation of an abstract 'we'; the simplification of history; and the

overwriting of old histories with new stories.

Vermeersch then continued by pointing to the morality insertion within these nationalist tactics through a framework of victimization and how they relate to the European Union. He stated that the notion of victim and victimizer have obtained a central position in nationalist rhetoric connecting past and present, where the majority is presented as a 'we' under threat, especially in the context of elections.

The notion of a stable historical 'we' hereby functions to legitimize a narrative where the majority once was a minority under threat, and thus still can be imagined as such. Europe in this context is transformed into a 'they' that is not part of the 'we' and thus receives the status of victimizer in contrast to the national 'victim'. Minority groups, especially those that have been Europeanized and to whom European legislation pertains, become framed as part of the European 'they' and are similarly excluded from the national 'we'.

He highlighted the shared responsibility of the EU in facilitating the move from a left/right to a we/they dichotomy, by giving the example of the EU's functioning as a moral agent in the EU enlargement, through policies of conditionality. Similarly, he made clear that the successes of nationalist policies cannot be disconnected from the failures of other forms of democratic attempts.

In this vein, he concluded by emphasizing the necessity to rethink the European institutions, to reform the machinery of ordinary citizens in participating in democracy, to guard the quality of public debate, and to connect democratic involvement with the dimension of memory. “Freedom of speech is not only freedom from censorship, but taking care and guarding the quality of public debate, also around historical memory”.

He further pointed to the possibility of bringing memory, especially within European institutions, to a meta level, where remembering and forgetting are taught and portrayed as inherently connected. The discussions also raised the notion of remembrance as solidarity, and the extent to which remembrance could be used to foster a European sense of solidarity. In these discussions however, it was also stressed that the romantic notion of unity has both detrimental and useful effects, and that we shouldn't oversimplify such notions as merely using for, or against us.

## Roundtable 1

### Europe for Citizen's Programme: future challenges

**Gilles Pelayo**

Head of Unit at Europe for Citizens (EACEA)

**Pavel Tychtl**

Policy officer at the DG Home

Chair: **Jordi Guixé**, EUROM director

The representatives of the European Commission focused on the future challenges of the [Europe for Citizens'](#) programme. The roundtable was chaired by Jordi Guixé, director of EUROM, and brought together Pavel Tychtl, a Policy Officer at the European Commission's Directorate-General of Migrations and Home Affairs (DG Home), and Gilles Pelayo, Head of Unit of Europe for Citizens at the Education, Culture and Audiovisual Executive Agency – EACEA.



After a brief introduction by Jordi Guixé, Gilles Pelayo kicked off the roundtable by building on Peter Vermeersch' speech and the notion of morality in European policies. Pelayo, stressed that public memory should be understood as a right, but also as a responsibility for European citizens. Referencing this moral element, he focused on its intersection with

remembrance in the recently launched [EU Justice, Rights, and Values Fund](#).

The role of the new fund is to promote policies in line with fundamental rights and European values, supporting the development of a European Area of Justice based on the rule of law and mutual trust. Pelayo stressed that it connects European remembrance with European democratic involvement and engagement, concepts that are similarly reflected in the [Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021-2027](#). Pelayo concluded by presenting some numbers of the previous [Multiannual Financial Framework](#), which have supported 150 projects in the strand of remembrance, involving over one thousand partners.

Pavel Tychtl continued by pointing to three elements he saw as key to European remembrance: an element of continuity, a construction of meaning, and a moral purpose. Tychtl hereby mainly directed his attention to the personal importance of memory, and its local dimensions. He referenced the “In Between?” project by the European Remembrance and Solidarity’s (ENRS) as an example of projects dealing with this personal dimension. He further emphasized the necessity to teach history as responsible citizenship, and questioned if raising memory to a meta level should happen at a European, or on a local level.

In his closing remarks, Jordi Guixé emphasized the importance of reinforcing the connection of remembrance and historical memory programmes with citizenship and

human rights values. For him, this interrelated character is especially important to consider in light of the role and form remembrance and historical memory should take in the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021-2027.

## The Iron Curtain Trail Trans European practices on memorial heritage

**Michael Cramer**

Member of European Parliament  
(Greens/EFA)

Member of European Parliament, [Michael Cramer](#), (Greens/EFA Parliamentary Group), presented the project of The [Iron Curtain Trail](#), a 6.800 kilometer cycle route running from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea along and across the former division of the continent. Initiated by Cramer in 2005, its motto is “experiencing the history of Europe’s division”, and the frequent crosses the route makes over the border has a clear performative character. Cramer described the project as exemplifying sustainable mobility and as a European ‘peace’ project and as a “tourist trail that would preserve the memory of the division of the continent, show how it has been overcome through peaceful European reunification, and promote a European identity”.

Through his keynote, the multitude of dimensions surrounding the Iron Curtain Trail became clear. Cramer for example pointed to the ‘Green Belt’ of flora and fauna that has flourished on the former ‘Death Strip’, while simultaneously pointing to an array of monuments and memorials along the route that had been marginalized and were in desperate need of upkeep. He also pointed to contemporary borders in Hungary and

Turkey that stood mere meters away from the former borders of the Iron Curtain. These examples, while eerie, show how such routes can be instrumentalized to enable discussions on contemporary border practices and migration routes.

The keynote further raised questions regarding the promotion of such routes and the various memorials, monuments, and structures it passes. While Cramer showed examples of signposts highlighting the route, he also made clear that these were not visible along the entire route. Similarly the keynote raised the question of how European citizens could become more involved and aware of the trail.



Cramer’s keynote also stressed the local and national differences in experiences and meanings pertaining to the history of the Iron Curtain, and even in the dates it was torn down. Still the Iron Curtain Trail seems to offer a quite productive framework to engage with these local and national differences, while simultaneously describing a larger formative European history.

## Roundtable 2

### Members of the European Parliament Transnational group of Historical Memory

The second roundtable brought together the Members the European Parliament [Ana Maria Gomes](#) (APSD), [Ana Miranda Paz](#) (Greens/EFA), and [Jordi Solé](#) (Greens/EFA). They represent the informal Transnational Group of Historic Memory within the Parliament, currently formed by Spanish and Portuguese members, and mainly focused on the historical memory related to Franco. Jordi Solé introduced the Transnational Group of Historical Memory, noted their quite informal structure, and pointed to their wish to enlarge. He also stressed the need to focus on reconciliation as an ongoing process. At the same time however, Solé made clear the necessity of focusing on the historical memories dealing with Franco in particular, because these lacked clear spokespersons on a European level. In regards to the new Multiannual Financial Framework of the period 2021-2027, he asserted the authority of the European Parliament to oppose, critique, and augment it.



Ana Maria Gomes (Portugal) highlighted the need to revive certain memories, giving the importance of the 25th April 1974 for Portugal, the date of

the Carnation Revolution/Coup, as an example. She further pointed to the troubling lack of remembrance, especially in Madrid, where buildings that were instrumentalized under the Franco regime, did not even receive plaques commenting on and contextualizing their history. Similarly, Gomes discussed how the former secret police headquarters of the PIDE in Lisbon, where under the Salazar dictatorship political prisoners were held and tortured, had been renovated and turned into a luxury apartment complex.

On a more optimistic note, she referenced both the Peniche Fortress, which an initiative by civil society, had successfully turned the into a museum, and the recently opened Museu do Aljube in the former prison of Aljube. Gomes hinted at the influence their Transnational Group was able to exert, and generally the influence European recognition and presence can have in such instances. This raises the question what memories should be dealt with on a European level, and to what extent increased European recognition of these memories might better equip local practitioners in getting these memories recognized. She further stated that she saw the role of justice as the main determining factor in the preservation, or lack of preservation, of memories in Justice, referencing the large discrepancies between how a country like Spain and a country like Germany have dealt with their past.

Ana Miranda Paz (Spain) subsequently focused on the case of the highly controversial Francisco Franco Foundation, a foundation which until

last year had as its honorary president Franco's daughter (who passed away in December 2017), and has been heavily critiqued for glorifying Franco's past. As an example, she pointed to the tours the foundation offers in Franco's former summer palace in Galicia, which the foundation describes as "an excellent opportunity to show the general public the greatness of the figure of Francisco Franco". Paz pointed to the foundation as a form of Francoism after Franco, referencing how the foundation manages the personal archives of the dictator, which are not open to the public. She also stressed the point of how impossible it would be to have a similar foundation glorifying Hitler in Germany, or Mussolini in Italy, and connected this to the vast differences in the way memory is preserved and not preserved in for example Germany and Spain. In connection to this point, she briefly mentioned the work done by the Transnational Group and others, through instruments of European and International law, to shut the foundation down.



The discussion further brought to the fore the necessity for common standards on historical memory in Europe, although one might question what form this could take, and if this is

feasible considering the vast differences in contexts.

### **Contribution by AMESDE**

#### **Association of Social and Democratic Memory (Spain)**

Mirta Núñez Díaz-Balart

Before the last roundtable, Jordi Guixé invited Mirta Núñez Díaz-Balart, member of the Social and Democratic Memory Association of Spain (AMESDE), to take the floor. After presenting the origins of the Association established in 2005, she exposed that the push for democratic historical memory in Spain faces a fierce opposition from the right wing parties, but also a lack of response from justice.

Núñez Díaz-Balart, who is also a professor of History of Social Communications at the University Complutense of Madrid, explained that over one hundred civil society organizations have proposed to the Congress of Deputies the creation of a Truth Commission on Franco's regime crimes. "Historical and democratic memory are a matter of State, and should inspire and determine public action in matters such as justice, education and culture, in order to prevent impunity and the return of authoritarianism and dictatorship", she stated.

Núñez finally stressed that the memory of the Spanish people is the memory of a European country that "wants to contribute to our modern-day Europe the best of its 20<sup>th</sup> century history". According to her, that is the struggle for freedom and social justice, and against the fascist coup d'état.

### Roundtable 3

#### Civil Society Networks and Projects

#### Best practices

Chair: **Anna Cozzoli**, Head of Sector of the Europe for Citizens programme (EACEA)

The final roundtable discussed best practices of remembrance initiatives, chaired by **Anna Cozzoli**, Head of Sector for European Remembrance and Civic participation of the Europe for Citizens programme (EACEA). The table brought together **Oriol López**, coordinator of the European Observatory on Memories (EUROM), **Rafal Rogulski**, director of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity (ENRS), **Bruno Boyer**, Head of International Relations at the [Mémorial de la Shoah](#), and **David Stoleru**, director of [The Beit Project](#). Before giving the floor to the members of the table, Anna Cozzoli emphasized that the projects to be presented combine different aspects of European remembrance practices. For her, they represent the aim of Europe for Citizens' programme to place bridges between citizenry and the European institutions.

Oriol López kicked off the roundtable by detailing the organization of EUROM and describing the three strands of the project, focusing on analysis, debate, and social participation. He also highlighted the growth of the EUROM [network](#), currently with 46 partners in 21 countries, both within and outside of Europe. He further discussed some of the recent [projects](#) initiated by the EUROM: the transformation of the

former prison 'La Model' in Barcelona, one of the main symbols of Francoist repression; the conference "[The Frog Hibernation](#)" which offered a reflection on the 10 years of Memory Laws and Policies in Spain and Catalonia; and the artistic project which brought together secondary school students and the urban artist Roc Blackblock to create a graffiti in memory of the victims of the Holocaust. López also discussed EUROM's dissemination, focusing on the magazine "[Observing Memories](#)" and on the use of social media to gain a further outreach.



Rafal Rogulski, director of the European Network Remembrance and Solidarity, continued by detailing the aims and projects of the ENRS. He stated that the objective of the network is to document and promote the study of the 20<sup>th</sup> century history and how it is remembered, with a focus on the fight against oppression and centered around the keywords memory, identity, dialogue, and understanding. The network is financed by the Member countries of the network (Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Romania), and by other means through its foundation. It has 275 partners in 25 countries, and has completed over 150 projects since 2010. He discussed ENRS's annual symposium, their

genealogies of memory conference, and education [projects](#) such as “InBetween?”, the Sound in Silence, and Hi-Story. Rogulski, further briefly discussed ENRS’s Remembrance and Solidarity: Studies in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century European History publishing platform.

For Mémorial de la Shoah, its director Bruno Boyer, discussed an experimental project of the organization’s that based itself on the principle of using the Holocaust as a starting point, and an approach for transnational dialogues for peace education. He described the basic principles of the project as gathering countries dealing with regional remembrance issues, building up partnerships between public education authorities, taking the holocaust as a starting point, and through this framework creating a sustainable regional dialogue. The [methodology](#) of this approach includes bringing together local and international speakers and including contemporary pedagogical challenges, to, through the framework of dealing with the Holocaust, touch on local histories of mass atrocities, without avoiding sensitive issues. Boyer described how previous projects have taken place in Riga (2016), Belgrade (2016), Skopje (2017), and Thessaloniki (2017), and further pointed to future projects planned to take place in Slovenia, Cyprus, and Ukraine.

Subsequently, David Stoleru discussed the final organization, The Beit Project. He described how the Beit Project focusses on the creation of a ‘mobile school’, a place of encounter in urban space. The project in essence brings together students from different backgrounds, religions, cultures, etc.,

and through the creation of a nomadic school, an urban place of encounter and learning, enables them to explore the city’s urban memories through different perspectives and to interpret these memories through links to contemporary realities. It especially deals with enabling the students to investigate large concepts such as ‘the other’, through the framework of the urban space. While on first sight, visually, looking quite simple (a makeshift house/school bench in an urban space), the project actually deals with quite complicated issues. Stoleru detailed how the project has already taken place in [12 cities](#), both within and outside of Europe.

## Reflections & Proposals

The representatives of the four organizations briefly concluded by looking forward and identifying certain elements of concern, possibilities and critiques, and presenting proposals related to the Europe for Citizens’ programme. They also raised some points for a larger European dimension of remembrance and historical memory, specifically in light of the recent Multiannual Financial Framework proposal of the period 2021-2027.



For Rafal Rogulski (ENRS), there is a need to create a shared space to improve the reflection on historical memory, especially as it pertains to divisions between North and South and East and West. He pointed to the strength of bi and multi-lateral collaborative projects, primarily in the field of education, that combine different state agents. Rogulski also emphasized how different points of view and unexpected outcomes shouldn't be shunned, but instead embraced. He pointed to the need to create shared education spaces and approaches that can combine a number of different, and perhaps competing, narratives and approaches within the European framework.

Bruno Boyer (Mémorial de la Shoah) explicitly highlighted the need to strengthen European remembrance. He reemphasized this need by connecting it to the contemporary developments in Poland, Croatia, Hungary, and France, and warning about the dangers a weakened focus on remembrance in European Institutions and their budgets would prove to the organizations working on remembrance in these countries. He thus ardently argued for the need to strengthen the Europe for Citizens' programme. Secondly, while acknowledging his non-objective positioning, Boyer argued for the need to maintain the singularity of the Holocaust as the main European remembrance framework, pointing to its inclusive and multidirectional capabilities.

David Stoleru remarked on the need to rethink European education, and the ways in which schools are

structured, focusing on the need to rethink the segmentation of historical studies and citizenship studies. In this vein, he argued for an approach that connects historical reflection with action, highlights active citizenship, and enables this active citizenship through the critical study of historical European memory. Stoleru finally pointed to possibility of embracing education of an experimental nature.

Oriol López (EUROM) remarked that connecting memory with citizenship is an obvious choice, but that there is a clear necessity to stress the element of remembrance. He directed attention to the fragility of initiatives in this field that do not receive financial support from national governments or private funds, and instead rely largely, or even solely on European support to stay afloat. Cutting back, or diminishing the focus on remembrance within these European programs and budgets, thus risks jeopardizing organizations that do invaluable work within the European field of remembrance and historical memory. López further pointed to EUROM's proposal to create a 'manifesto' to defend the need of EU remembrance policies. The document shall reflect the collaboration of the institutions present in the roundtable, and will be submitted to the European institutions. He finally succinctly concluded by pointing to the need to defend and improve the work of memory professionals, and to defend this work against public/state interference.

## Closing Remarks

**Jordi Guixé**, Director of EUROM  
**Constanze Itzel**, Head of Unit of the  
House of European History

In concluding the meeting, the House of European History and the European Observatory on Memories (EUROM) announced the intention of making the Network Meeting an annual event, keeping in mind the importance of a structural and continued dialogue between the EU institutions, academicians, organizations and practitioners in the field of remembrance and historical memory. The intention is to find frameworks through which these dimensions productively engage with each other in a critical and reflective way. The

proposal takes into account the necessity of actively analyzing the different connections and conflicts between personal, local, regional, national, European, and global dimensions.

Building on this, Jordi Guixé launched the proposition of conducting a survey on memory conflicts to lay the foundations of a comparative European research focused on the debates and hot spots of the discussions about the recent past. The kickoff meeting to prepare the project took place on June 6th, the day after the EUROM network meeting, and gathered representatives of the University of Leuven, the University Carlos III of Madrid, the University of Barcelona and Centre Max Weber/ CNRS.

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The European Observatory on Memories –EUROM is a transnational network of institutions and organizations committed to research and promotion of public historical memory policies. Its main objective is to contribute to the reflection surrounding recent history defending memory diversity and plurality. EUROM is led by the [Solidarity Foundation of the University of Barcelona](#) with the support of the European Commission's program *Europe for Citizens*.